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David Yellin- This is tape 1, tape 1 of September 19th 1968 we are in the Claridge Hotel room 1596 and this is David Yellin with Henry Mitchell and we are expecting Mayor Lobe for an interview this afternoon at the lunch table, the luncheon round table at the Claridge. (Tape Break)

David Yellin- This is a private luncheon and the room number is 1526, 1526. (Tape Break)

Henry Mitchell- Save your time I would go over what you have already been over. Answer these as briefly or as fully as you feel like.

Henry Lobe- Fine.

Henry Mitchell- Was there anything in the handling of the strike locally by either press or broadcasting that helped or hindered you in your job of handling this strike?

Henry Lobe- Well as far as the local press goes I thought they did an very objective job of reporting both sides of the news. There were things that I liked and things that I didn't like but both with the Precimeter and the Commercial Appeal and this the news media that I am talking about. I thought the reporting was fair and straight down the line. As far as the out of town press goes it was indescribable, completely not factual, but had very little effect locally. The things that they wrote were so absurd that nobody paid any attention to them locally. People knew that they weren't true.

Henry Mitchell- There was nothing in the local coverage though that either hurt or helped you in your handling of this?

Henry Lobe- No I would say that the local reporting (muffled) objectivity and fairness was that people knew what the devil was going on, it was my insistence that the meetings be open that included them in from the ground floor and gave them an ability to do the job that they did because they knew what was happening. I would say it was a definite help in that people knew what was happening.

Henry Mitchell- Mayor on February the 24th that was when the city issued the injunction refraining labor leaders from any further activity on the strike, going on with it or taking any further part. That was a perfectly legal operation. Can you tell me what you think of that, how that injunction came about and if you think that was a good idea?

Henry Lobe- Well it wasn't a case of being a good idea, in fact, I much didn't like the idea. But it was explained to me by the city attorney and otherwise and I had a group of friends I was advising with because of something of this magnitude and complexity you need advice. Since the strike was illegal, and it was, and since there was a previous injunction and it was there in existence, we didn't get a new

injunction, it was outstanding from the previous administration. That we simply went into court and asked that the court do its duty and the court did. Now as far as the injunction goes, the risks involved were that somebody would have to go to jail. We didn't want to send anybody to jail. I mean it doesn't make me feel better to get up happy that somebody else is in jail. But after the number of times that we complained about the illegality it was a matter that had to be turned over to the courts finally when nothing else would do it and we did.

Henry Mitchell- You would feel in a situation like that, that since it was against the law that any failure to go on would be in effect ignoring the law.

Henry Lobe- Right, in fact, it had gotten to the point where the newspapers editorial would sort of comment if it is illegal why don't you go to court.

David Yellin- May I ask something?

Henry Mitchell- Yeah.

David Yellin- You mentioned that you were not in favor of it.

Henry Lobe- I was not against it I was not in favor of it. I am not a lawyer, when the lawyer explains that we had a duty to do it I was in agreement.

David Yellin- I see.

Henry Lobe- In other words not being a lawyer, I didn't understand that the ramifications of why we had to go and what we had to do. So they explained it to me and when I thought that we had no choice but to do what we were complaining about and go by the law, we went by the law.

David Yellin- Now, if you understand we are just trying to find out some of the events. Did you explore or did anybody suggest you might explore another method?

Henry Lobe- I don't want to go outside. We tried every method possible in talking to him and explaining to them and keeping open meetings and letting the public know what is going on.

Henry Mitchell- Wouldn't you like some?

Henry Lobe- No. In dealing with anybody that came up, talking with them rather and making suggestions that might have obviated (muffled) strike breakers. And I mentioned this to you. Put the garbage trucks out and let people holler on. Everywhere we could we tried to get it behind us. We were available to talk to anybody at anytime and we tried everything else and this is what they wanted. I think I told you before that what they were really after was a check off and funds and I am not for a check off, very much against it and I will not go for it. We went over this didn't we?

David Yellin- Yes we went over that part of it, yeah.

Henry Mitchell- (Muffled).

David Yellin- Did the injunction and later, did that impede you in anyway? During negotiations?

Henry Lobe- Oh yeah it varied, there was some things that we couldn't do that legally the city attorneys advised me of. Once the injunction was issued, I have forgotten what they were. But there was certain restrictions but they were minor.

Henry Mitchell- Well we could ask you in a different relationship with them once the thing was in a court.

Henry Lobe- The restrictions were really against the other side but there were certain things that we couldn't do that would have been in contempt of court.

David Yellin- I wonder if any misunderstanding mayor, came about because here you were saying and indeed you followed it you have an open door, you want to talk, you want everybody to know how you feel and so on. And yet, this very injunction that ironically you had to call...

Henry Lobe- (muffled) we waited, in fact, I noticed a comment the other day by this same Champa in Baltimore. That in Baltimore in two days they had an injunction and of course Champa I certainly don't agree with for I am not a racist man but Champa was quoted in the paper last week, it took a racist mayor according to him a couple of weeks to get an injunction, I think it was longer than that actually, where in Baltimore they got to it in two days.

Henry Mitchell- DO you feel somewhat the same way, is there any difference in the federal court injunction against that march that was proposed on the 8th, that was the Monday after Martin Luther King was shot.

Henry Lobe- No and injunction by court is an injunction and we are a government of law and when the court rules, be it the federal court and the state court unless there is a conflicting ruling the law should be carried out.

Henry Mitchell- Could you trace briefly or however you think your own relationship with the city council during this whole period of the strike?

Henry Lobe- Well there is no way really my memory isn't that good. This primarily was an executive matter, some of the council members as individuals very definitely interfered and got over the executive branch, it is a matter of record. In so doing they hurt what we were trying to do. The union found that when they couldn't get something from the executive branch they could try and get it, whether they could get it or not, from the council and it would be days of indecision before the council would say yay, or nay and they were able to excite their followers during this period and by the time certain things the council might do before they ruled and individual council members did even more than that. For instance there was a lot of on the council members talking about the number of cents in the settlement which was

specifically used to get more of a settlement. And there are other examples, I mean you can go back to the chronological record.

David Yellin- In other words and again since we are doing this for the record our questions are mainly to simplify. There was a sort of divided and conquer approach between you and the council?

Henry Lobe- No a majority of the council I am not certain at all did this. Some of the members of the council lent themselves to being divided. Some of the members of the council particularly of course some of the negro members I understand didn't agree with me and therefore they had to do what they thought was right. I am not critical of them for doing it except where they get into executive prerogatives which they did on occasion.

Henry Mitchell- (muffled) not their authority but yours.

Henry Lobe- That's right. Of course, on occasion they did it inadvertently. There was a meeting called of the public works committee and we had a chaotic situation which resulted again in the matter of record in the newspaper.

David Yellin- Now, however what you are suggesting mayor, or are you and that is what we don't want to leave hanging. Do you think this was part of the union strategy or this just happened inadvertently?

Henry Lobe- Oh of course. I don't know whether they intended to do it when they came here or not but there were some intelligent people with the union and when they saw this thing as an opportunity they exploited it. Whether they intended to do it in the outset you are going to have to ask the union.

David Yellin- But once they saw the opening they took advantage of it as much as possible.

Henry Lobe- Oh sure.

Henry Mitchell- Like any other people if they can't do it one way they will try another way.

Henry Lobe- Of course.

David Yellin- Now do you think that some of the councilmen that lent themselves, knew that they were?

Henry Lobe- I think it was a combination of a lot of things. I think that some of them perhaps at least one or two of them were frightened as I identified earlier I think several of them didn't agree with me and I think perhaps there was the reasons. I am not saying they are slighting the council.

David Yellin- Let me just throw in a thought, could you kind of speculate to how much dislocation happened as a result of it being so early in the new form of the government?

Henry Lobe- Well I think that this is probably calculated. Whether it was calculated by the local union or the international there are different opinions and nobody can tell. But the time that the (muffled) was in the gap between the new administration and the new one talking over sure. This was a good time to do it, this was part of it. As I said many times, I had been the chair seat long enough to be unfair to organized labor.

David Yellin- This is not precisely you have answered that but do you, this is asking you to kind of to project. I am just arbitrarily setting the time, say it happened a year later, the functioning between you and the council would have been tested in other things, like emotional things.

Henry Lobe- I think so. I think we are still learning about it even at this time and this is September the 1st here and that was months and months ago.

David Yellin- Do you think it would have been different and could have been different had the old city commission as say some union members charged that they were able to deal with you for instance when you were there, they could deal with you directly. They could deal with Mr. Farris, Mr. Sisson...

Henry Lobe- They had a direct way of negotiating right from the outset. All they do was to come in the door. In fact, the first day of the strike I sat there all day and made a public statement that we want to talk to them whoever is representing these men and I am going to sit here and wait for them. Door was open waiting for them and they didn't come in until the second day and then trouble getting in.

David Yellin- You don't feel it was any different in the form of government?

Henry Lobe- Oh no if somebody that....the buck stops passing at the mayor's door in the executive branch in the new form of government, I was available to them.

Henry Mitchell- You felt right along I think from your earlier comments and from your whole viewpoint that far from there not being a way to get together that the labor people are the people at the back of this strike for whatever reason were particularly keen not to reach an agreement and force the strike right along, isn't that what you are saying?

Henry Lobe- I don't know. I mean you got to ask them that, I don't know.

Henry Mitchell- But in any case you were always available. And did in fact have a number of...

Henry Lobe- I had weeks, day after day and let the rest of the city business go for awhile to handle this, this was more important.

Henry Mitchell- Well we wanted you to say that on the tape because many as you know accounts indicate that there was no communication and that is where I...

Henry Lobe- The negotiations which it was available at any time were broken off three times and in each instance they were broken off by the union.

David Yellin- Now, well I think maybe we will get tot that but are you talking about he negotiations that started after March 23rd?

Henry Lobe- I don't know when they started, there was three different times they broke off negotiations.

David Yellin- After Mr. Miles came in?

Henry Lobe- No. was it two before? My memory gets hazy, but every time they broke them off the union broke them off we never refused to talk. I remember it was three times and maybe (muffled) whatever.

Henry Mitchell- Can you say a little bit about the circumstances leading to the appointment of Frank Miles as mediator?

Henry Lobe- There weren't any circumstances, what heck, how was he appointed? I had known Frank for years and liked him and it was suggested to me and I went along with it and the union went along with it and the council recommended it as I remember it, that he be the guy.

David Yellin- Is it possible mayor lobe to discuss that a little more fully?

Henry Lobe- Well I mean I just told you what happened what do you mean more fully?

David Yellin- Well it not precisely. The strike started February 12th and here it was March 23rd you know there was 7 weeks and please understand me I am trying to consolidate you know what other people have said and so on, why did it taker that long?

Henry Lobe- To get to Frank Miles?

David Yellin- Yeah.

Henry Lobe- Because there were a lot of things tried. Nobody put a piece of paper in there that said try Frank Miles, at some point we wanted to try a mediator and again you can go to the record and get that.

David Yellin- I am sorry to go to a mediator, did somebody suggest that how did that....

Henry Lobe- I don't remember. I mean you all get to the point where....

David Yellin- Well you see this is one of the reasons that we like to talk with you.

Henry Lobe- It is starting to get hazy in my mind.

David Yellin- I know and this is not to embarrass you.

Henry Lobe- Oh you are not embarrassing me, I will do anything.

Henry Mitchell- (Muffled) I cannot remember the exact dates on things.

Henry Lobe- I Have no idea the dates, all I remember is that this came up, I knew Frank Miles, would I go along? Sure. So we had Frank Miles.

David Yellin- Now this however was mediation, it wasn't arbitration.

Henry Lobe- I don't remember the difference between the two. I learned exactly what they meant during the thing and I have forgotten so skip that. What do you mean mediation or arbitration.

David Yellin- Well there is a difference isn't there?

Henry Lobe- Well all I remember is that I didn't let go of any prerogatives of the mayor's office. I remember the definition of those two words hinged on that. I didn't give to anybody else what I was elected to do, never did and won't. Which word fits it, you select. One of them does and one of them doesn't as I remember.

Henry Mitchell- (Muffled).

Henry Lobe- Well no prerogatives of the mayor's office (muffled).

David Yellin- Well under arbitration as I understand it you would say to Henry Mitchell here, Henry whatever you decide I will abide by.

Henry Lobe- That was not done.

Henry Mitchell- That is arbitration and so this other was mediation.

David Yellin- Meditation it is alright for...

Henry Lobe- He said (muffled) Henry Mitchell- A recommendation rather than a decision by a 3rd party.

Henry Lobe- I don't think a man should be elected and do that, I didn't do it.

Henry Mitchell- Do you remember it has been a long time, the circumstances, more particularly the circumstance is a pretentious word, how you heard about Martin King's death?

Henry Lobe- Yeah I was in the car going to Ole Miss to speak tot eh Ole Miss law school. We were out on the highway, on the expressway (muffled). And we say the sheriff, we stopped to eat, we stopped because he had called me that day and wanted to talk to me and I said Bill what do you want you called me today? And he

said did you hear that Dr. King had just been shot and I called Frank Holloman on the car phone where you could find it and we turned around and came back.

Henry Mitchell- I see.

David Yellin- Who was in the car with you mayor, do you remember?

Henry Lobe- Well I had (muffled) myself and I had a guy of mine that was a fraternity brother named Frank Hall I believe his name is. Either one of your guys go with me that night.

Body Guard- Yes sir I was.

Henry Lobe- Lieutenant B.R. McCarver, who else was in the car I have forgot.

Body Guard- (Muffled)

Henry Lobe- Was (muffled) in the car?

David Yellin- You mean you saw Sheriff Morris on the road and you...

Henry Lobe- We stopped on the road yeah.

David Yellin- You are always doing that aren't you?

Henry Lobe- Well I think he had called me that day and I had a phone in my car I was making my calls and one of the calls was sheriff Morris and there he was so I stopped and talked to him.

Henry Mitchell- It makes no difference but I would have just assumed you were in your office or at home or somewhere, I am glad we asked this.

David Yellin- Did you go back to your office?

Henry Lobe- Well sure turned around and went back.

David Yellin- Would it be...

Henry Lobe- Called Ole Miss and told them I couldn't come and they had already heard he report and they understood. (muffled) I imagine.

David Yellin- Could you discuss what happened thereafter?

Henry Lobe- What do you mean?

David Yellin- I mean did anybody come to your office? Did you call anybody? Do you recall that?

Henry Lobe- Well yeah we went back to the office and there were a lot of people that came by.

David Yellin- Well....

Henry Mitchell- I don't know what anybody could do at exactly that time, can you tell us what you thought?

Henry Lobe- Nobody has the right to take anybody else's life. And of course in addition to that and sincere regret, it was a regret that is was horrible enough that it happened. I wished that it had not happened in our city and in addition there was a desired express of regret and this was done.

Henry Mitchell- That was done virtually immediately as I remember?

Henry Lobe- Well it wasn't done immediately in fact, I left the office when it didn't come on TV and different people called in and said we have seen several people present and not you. I actually got in the car and went out to the TV stations and I said you are hurting Memphis with your (muffled). I have given you a request and you put on everybody but me and I am the local mayor. I am not looking for publicity but I think you ought to put my regret on their too and they finally did. Actually I went out to 13 and I believe I went to 5 too and maybe to 3. All three of them.

David Yellin- Mayor what did you do call in?

Henry Lobe- Well first I called in and that didn't do it so then I got in the car and went to all three of them.

David Yellin- I see you were referring to the calls that you made that they didn't report.

Henry Lobe- Well no, we were looking for it and it didn't come one.

David Yellin- But you called?

Henry Lobe- I called first and then I went out. And when I went out they put me on.

Henry Mitchell- That is probably disorganization of the TV station.

Henry Lobe- Well it was and the whole city was disorganized. When I drove out there was nobody there. Let me ask because it is 1:30 how much more have you got?

Henry Mitchell- I am through with the things t hat have occurred.

Henry Lobe- Great because as you know today is my open house day.

Henry Mitchell- I don't like to come in with things written down.

Henry Lobe- That's alright is there anything else quick because I don't stay too long I am always this way.

Henry Mitchell- How about it David?

David Yellin- Well, no, this is fine.

Henry Lobe- I don't want to be too late if you have got some thing else ask it we will just take another 5.

David Yellin- I would in a way kind of prefer maybe if we can have another time.

Henry Lobe- We can.

David Yellin- Because you see...

Henry Lobe- I have so darn much to do...

David Yellin- I know you do but you see here is the thing.

Henry Lobe- Here is the thing my wife got out of the hospital and she got(muffled) we got home on Monday. In spit of that I was out last night and the night before and she is mad as the devil. But (muffled) each morning this week. It stays this way because I do the job. If there is anything else, let's hit it right now. This is back, I look ahead, this is my philosophy now, Henry is more of a thinker than I am. I like to do things and I like to get into them, I don't look back and I am not particularly interested in looking back. You all wanted to do this and we have done it, this is the 3rd time. This is...

David Yellin- Well in some way we still have not squared away on it.

Henry Lobe- On what?

David Yellin- On the intention of what we are trying to do. See the intention of what we are trying to do is not at all to look back for looking back's sake but we are looking ahead and I don't mean to....we are not in a forensic....for instance as we have said and we have said it to so many people, I may say now we have interviewed about 100 people.

Henry Lobe- 4 times?

David Yellin- No, but we have interviewed people for 8 hours.

Henry Lobe- Well that is good but I don't have time for that.

David Yellin- I know you don't, and I am not making, the point I am making mayor Lobe and I am going to try and say it as strongly as possible from a great conviction is that the incidents of what happened that are in the papers is not what we want to find out from you.

Henry Lobe- What else do you want to ask?

David Yellin- We want to find out from you the behind the scenes how you were involved, we want to give as much of an opportunity to you as anybody else to go down on the record as the person you are not what somebody who comes in...

Henry Lobe- I will tell you what you do I will be glad to meet with you any number of times you want, you just spend one day with me. You be at my house at 6am and go with me until 1 am.

David Yellin- With a tape recorder?

Henry Lobe- Fine by me. I couldn't care less, I don't do anything that I am embarrassed too. But I am trying to put something over to you that you are not willing because you are trying to do something. That is alright, I think I have done enough for you. If we do it again you just join me at 6:30 at the house some morning and stay with me until 1:00 in the morning.

Henry Mitchell- Alright.

Henry Lobe- Pick you a day.

Henry Mitchell- Fair enough.

Henry Lobe- And then you will get an idea of why I am so pushed. I do the job. If somebody calls me I call them back.

David Yellin- See but mayor...

Henry Lobe- Somebody wants me to see them I see them and this is an (muffled) because I have spent so much time with you it is hurting me on everything else.

Henry Mitchell- It is time and time is limited you can't make more.

Henry Lobe- That is the point.

Henry Mitchell- We of course appreciate the time you have (muffled).

Henry Lobe- You and I, two blunt individuals who know each other you know I am not ugly.

Henry Mitchell- No you are not.

Henry Lobe- But in my honesty I have had enough of this I have too much to do. At the moment we have a hospital situation that I am working like the devil on and I am missing the ones that are alive and not the ones that are behind me. Don't you see.

Henry Mitchell- I understand and I appreciate your time today. I know it isn't convenient and I appreciate the time that we have had thus far. So let's....

Henry Lobe- Never mind a whole day we will do it another time. It just isn't any good time.

Henry Mitchell- I understand that. Don't worry if we have a couple of gaps in all these tapes.

Henry Lobe- Can you do it on the phone?

Henry Mitchell- Perhaps we could.

Henry Lobe- Well hell pick up the phone and call me.

Henry Mitchell- Alright. I don't want you to think that we think that you haven't cooperated because that is not our view at all.

Henry Lobe- Mr. Yellin I don't know you like I know Hannah, I just have a lot going and I am busy at it. Now I am frank as they come and I have talked to anything you want. Pick up the phone if you can do it and call me and then Henry I am not sure I have got to cal you back on something. Telephone call, I can squeeze in.

David Yellin- Mayor, you know the matter of cooperation is sometimes a matter of...you cooperated beautifully. It so happens that you were involved in this more than anybody, any other living person in the world. That is why you...

Henry Lobe- I have got to go to this open house. Mr. Yellin I am sorry but.... (Tape End)